

# Holiday Safety Tips



Every holiday season hundreds of people across the nation lose their lives from residential fires, stress, vehicle accidents, avalanches and other snow related activity.

The following holiday safety tips are offered with our sincere wish that you have a joyous and safe holiday season.

## **Christmas Tree Safety**

- Choose a fresh Christmas tree, and put it in a stand designed not to tip over.
- Place the tree away from heat sources and exits, and water the tree constantly.
- If you purchase an artificial tree make sure it is labeled fire-retardant.

## **Holiday Lighting**

- Be sure candles are placed in sturdy non-combustible holders, and are kept well away from decorations and other combustible materials.
- Don't display lighted candles in windows or near exits.
- For outdoor decorations use only those lights labeled for outdoor use.
- Don't forget to unplug all lights before leaving home or going to sleep.

## **Chimney Maintenance**

- Have your chimney checked every year.
- Use only well seasoned hardwood in your fireplace or woodstove.
- Install a carbon monoxide detector.

## **Winter Driving Tips**

- Don't be in a hurry "Buckle Up."
- Check tires for wear and proper inflation.
- Check wiper blades and washer fluid reservoir.
- Don't tailgate! It takes three to nine times longer to stop on rain, snow or ice.
- Brake slowly. Avoid making sudden moves.
- Listen to traveler's advisories and weather reports during your travel. Be prepared to get off the road if advised to do so.
- Keep an emergency survival kit in your car or truck.
- If you get stuck stay with your car unless there is a house in sight.
- If you get stuck wear layers of clothing and keep the blood circulating by clapping your hands and stomping your feet.
- Run the car engine 15 minutes with at least 15 minutes in between. Crack the window for ventilation and be sure the tail pipe isn't clogged with snow.

## **USING A GENERATOR DURING POWER OUTAGES**

When purchasing a generator make sure you get one listed with the Underwriter's Laboratory (UL) or Factory Mutual (FM).

Look to the labels on lighting, appliances, and equipment you plan to connect to the generator to determine the amount of power that will be needed to operate the equipment. For lighting, the power of the light bulb indicates the power needed. Appliances and equipment usually have labels indicating power requirements on them. Choose a generator that produces more power than will be drawn by the combination of lighting, appliances, and equipment you plan to connect to the generator including the initial surge when it is turned on. If your equipment draws more power than the generator can produce, then you may blow a fuse on the generator or damage the connected equipment.

Follow the directions supplied with your generator. Never use portable generators indoors, this includes inside a garage. Adequate ventilation is necessary when running the generator. Proper refueling measures, outlined in the owner's manual, must be carefully followed. Make sure you have properly working Carbon Monoxide (CO) alarms inside your home.

Allow your generator cool down before refueling. You must store extra generator fuel in an approved safety can. Store fuel for the generator out of doors in a locked shed or other protected area. Do not store fuel in a garage, basement, or anywhere inside a home, vapors can be released that may cause illness and are a potential fire or explosion hazard.

Connect the equipment you want to power directly to the outlets on the generator. Do not hook up a generator to your home's electrical service. Home-use (non-industrial) generators do not supply enough amperage to supply sufficient power for today's homes (that is, to run a furnace, lighting, appliances, and other electronic equipment). Unless your home's power supply was installed with a disconnect to the main power feeding lines, power you put into your home from a generator could "backfeed" into the main line and cause problems for the electrical utility company, your neighbors, or yourself. "Backfeeding" is supplying electrical power from a generator at the residence into the incoming utility lines. This

occurs when the necessary equipment used to isolate the generator from the incoming power lines is not installed.

The 1999 National Electrical Code, published by the National Fire Protection Association, is a nationally recognized standard for safe electrical installations. The NEC does permit an interface between the normal power source (generally the electric utility) and an alternate power source (such as a standby or portable generator) provided that the proper transfer equipment that prevents "backfeeding" is used. Simply connecting a cord from the generator to a point on the permanent wiring system and "backfeeding" power is an unsafe method to supply a building during a utility outage.

Improper connection methods not only endanger the building occupants, but pose a serious hazard to electric utility workers as well.

There are a number of products available that will provide either an automatic or manual transfer between two power sources in a manner prescribed by the NEC. When selecting a product for this function, it should be one that has been evaluated for safe performance by a nationally recognized testing organization such as Underwriters Laboratories. The product must be installed according to the NEC, all applicable state and local codes, and the manufacturer's instructions. Homeowners should only attempt to install such products if they have a thorough knowledge of safe electrical installation practices for this type of equipment. Otherwise a qualified electrician should be contacted.

This technical sheet has been prepared using materials from the American Red Cross, and the National Fire Protection Association.

Washington Military Department,  
Emergency Management Division, 2002

# WATER PIPES



Frozen water pipes are not life threatening, however frozen or broken water pipes do cause damage to homes each winter. If the pipes in the walls are not properly insulated they can freeze and rupture. (An eighth-of-an-inch crack in a pipe can release up to 250 gallons of water a day, soaking floors, rugs, and furniture.)

To protect your home or apartment from the mess and aggravation of frozen pipes, follow the simple steps below.

## **Before Cold Weather**

- Locate and insulate pipes most susceptible to freezing - typically those near outer walls, in crawl spaces, or in the attic.
- Wrap the pipes with UL approved heat tape.
- Seal any leaks that allow cold air inside where pipes are located.
- Disconnect garden hoses. Shut off and drain water from pipes leading to outside faucets, this will reduce the chance of freezing in the short span of pipe just inside the house.

## **When The Weather Gets Cold**

- Let hot and cold water trickle at night from a faucet on an outside wall.
- Open cabinet doors to allowing heat to get to uninsulated pipes under a sink or appliance near an outer wall.
- Make sure heat is left on and set no lower than 55 degrees.
- If you plan to be away:
  - Have someone check your house daily to make sure the heat is still on.
  - Drain and shut off the water system (except indoor sprinkler systems).

## **If the Pipes Freeze**

- Make sure you and your family knows how to shut off the water, in case pipes burst. Stopping the flow of water can minimize the damage to your home. Call a plumber and contact your insurance agent.
- Never try to thaw a pipe with an open flame or torch.
- There is always the potential for electric shock in and around standing water, be careful.

# WHAT TO DO WHEN YOU ARE CAUGHT IN A WINTER STORM



Winter storms are considered *deceptive killers*.... most deaths are indirectly related to the storm.

- People die in traffic accidents on icy roads.
- People die of a heart attack while shoveling snow.
- People die of hypothermia from prolonged exposure to cold.

**AVOID OVEREXERTION**, such as shoveling heavy snow, pushing a car, or walking in deep snow. The strain from the cold and the hard labor may cause a heart attack. Sweating could lead to a chill and hypothermia.

## When Caught in a Winter Storm...

### Outside

- Find shelter.
- Try to stay dry.
- Cover all exposed parts of the body.
- Prepare a lean-to, windbreak or snow cave for protection from the wind and cold.
- Build a fire for heat and to attract attention.
- Place rocks around the fire to absorb and reflect heat.
- Do not eat snow, snow will lower your body temperature

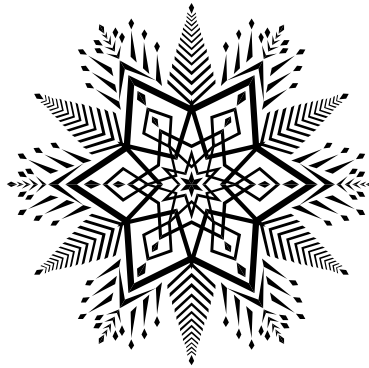
### In a Car or Truck

- Stay in your car or truck.
- Disorientation occurs quickly in wind-driven snow and cold.
- Run the motor about ten to fifteen minutes each hour for heat.
- Open the window a little for fresh air to avoid carbon monoxide poisoning.
- Make sure your exhaust pipe is not blocked.
- Make yourself visible to rescuers.
  - Turn on your dome light at night when you run your engine.
  - Tie a colored cloth (preferably red) to your antenna or door.

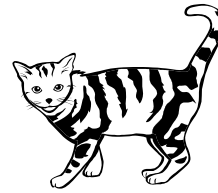
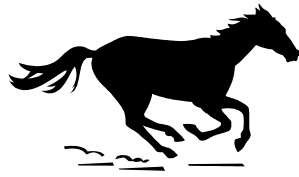
- Raise the hood indicating trouble after the snow stops falling.
- Exercise from time to time by vigorously moving arms, legs, fingers, and toes to keep blood circulating and to keep warm.

#### **At Home or in a Building**

- Stay inside.
- When using alternative heat from a fireplace, wood stove, space heater, etc., use fire safeguards and proper ventilation.
- Close off unneeded rooms.
- Stuff towels and rags in cracks and under doors to keep the heat in.
- Cover windows at night to keep heat in.
- Eat and drink. Food provides the body with energy for producing its own heat.
- Keep the body replenished with fluids to prevent dehydration.
- Wear layers of loose-fitting, lightweight, warm clothing. Remove layers to avoid overheating, perspiration, and subsequent chill.



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## **Winter Care for Pets and Large Animals**

*Winter is rapidly approaching, bringing cold weather and winter precipitation. While some pets like St. Bernard's and some long hair cats are prepared for the cold weather many pets are not. Precautions for all pets are still necessary.*

### **Outdoor Pets**

- Be sure your pet has a warm, dry place out of the elements to get warm.
- Remove snow and ice from your pets coat too prevent frost bite.
- Check on your pet often and observe its behavior.
- On the coldest days allow the pet to come indoors or a heated place in the garage.
- Feed smaller portions more often (morning and late afternoon feedings) and be sure your pets have plenty of fresh water. Check the water often making sure it doesn't freeze.

### **Inside Pets**

- Allow indoor pets outside long enough for exercise and to "go" only.
- Supervise your indoor pets when they are outside.

**If cats run free in your neighborhood, tap on your hood before starting your car. Cats will often climb under the hoods of cars to get warm.**

### **Large Animals (Horses)**

- If your horse spends most of its time outdoors in an uncovered area, the construction of a run-in shed (wind break) should be a top priority. During heavy snow, the shed provides the only dry place for the animal to sleep. Face the opening of the shed to the south for maximum sun. The shed is also a good place to feed.
- When feeding your horse on cold days keep in mind a large portion of the energy that is consumed will go to heating the body therefore, a higher dietary energy content is important.
- Water is very important for your animal. Studies have shown that if water is warmed up, the amount consumed by the horse is much higher. Schedule several water changes each day to promote more drinking.

**Remember, pets are family too!**

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## Winter Travel Survival Kit

*Keep the following items in your car during the winter. If you should become stranded during a winter storm these items will make you more comfortable until the storm passes.*

- Blankets and/or sleeping bags
- High calorie, non-perishable food
- Several bottles of water
- Flashlight with extra batteries
- First aid kit
- Knife
- Extra clothing to keep dry
- Plastic bags for sanitation
- A smaller can and water-proof matches to melt snow for drinking water
- Bag of sand (or cat litter) for generating traction under wheels
- Car chains
- Shovel
- Windshield scraper and brush
- Tool kit
- Tow rope
- Booster cables
- Compass
- Road Maps
- Extra newspaper for insulation
- A candle in a metal can or other fireproof container. While candles are generally not recommended in disaster situations, having one in your car can be a source of heat and light if you are stranded.
- Cards, games, and puzzles
- A brightly colored cloth to tie to the antenna

*Remember, keep your gas tank full for emergency use and to keep the fuel line from freezing.*

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## WINTER VEHICLE OPERATION

*Winter driving is often the most difficult due to blowing snow, icy slick spots and fewer daylight hours. When on the road observe the following:*

- Buckle your seat belts!
- Be prepared to turn back and seek shelter if conditions become threatening.
- In fog, drive with your headlights set on dim or use foglights. If the fog is too dense, pull off the roadway and stop in a safe area where you can be seen by other vehicles.
- In rain, fog, snow or sleet, do not overdrive your headlights. Stay within the limits of your vision.
- Keep your windows clear of snow and ice. Do not start until your windshield is defrosted.
- Drive slower and increase your following distance. Your speed should be adjusted for the road conditions and match the flow of traffic.
- Roadway conditions may vary depending on the sun, shade, or roadway surface. Watch for slick spots especially under bridges, on overpasses and in shaded spots. Be prepared to react physically and mentally.
- If the pavement is snow or ice covered, start slowly and brake gently. If you start to slide, ease off the gas pedal or brakes. Steer into the direction of the skid until you feel you have regained traction then straighten your vehicle.
- When a snowplow is coming towards you, allow plenty of room for the plow to pass
- When you approach a snowplow from behind, pass with care and only when you can see the road ahead of the plow. You should not try to pass in blowing snow; there may be a vehicle in the cloud of snow.
- Be alert when you approach a cloud of snow, which covers the road, especially on passing lanes of interstates or freeways. A snowplow may be at work clearing the lane or preparing to turn around.
- Be careful after a minor rear end accident. If you are bumped from behind and you do not feel comfortable exiting your vehicle, motion the other driver and drive to the nearest police station, 24-hour store, service station, hospital or fire station. Do not pull over until it is safe to do so.



## Winter Weather

### Tips for Citizens With Special Needs

Disabled citizens have special needs during periods of severe cold spells freezing or below freezing temperatures, ice and snow, and low wind chills.

#### Freezing Temperatures

If you must go outside during freezing or below freezing temperatures we suggest the following to help retain the heat in your body.

- Several layers of clothes with scarves for your neck, head and chest.
- If possible wear a pair of thermal gloves underneath a pair of mittens. This will allow you to manipulate the fingers while having the hand enveloped in warmth.
- Wear at least 2 pair of thick socks underneath lined boots.
- Keep your head covered with a thermal cap with earflaps.
- If in a wheelchair use a small lap blanket to wrap around your legs, tucking it in on the sides or underneath yourself to maintain heat to your stomach and lower extremities.
- Have the automobile warmed up before getting into it.
- Shorten the time you must spend outside.
- If you use a working assistance dog, have a blanket for him to sit or lay on in the vehicle. Also, use a dog coat for him to wear underneath his regular harness. Consider dog boots for his feet.

#### Ice, Sleet and Freezing Rain

Ice, sleet and freezing rain are very dangerous for those who use mobility aides for walking or for guiding their directional path. We suggest the following:

- Wheelchair users can purchase pneumatic tires for better traction during the winter months. A less expensive alternative is standard dirt bicycle tires found in bicycle shops.
- Have ramps cleared of ice by using standard table salt or cat litter. Rock salt is poisonous to working assistance dogs and can also be slippery depending on the type of mobility aide you are using.
- If using canes, walkers, forearm cuffs, or a wheelchair remember the freezing rain will stick to these aides and make the metal parts especially

slippery and very cold to the touch. You may wish to use gripper-driving gloves.

- When you transfer back into your automobile remove the tires from your wheelchair and shake the debris and ice off them before putting them in your vehicle.
- When you return home as soon as possible wipe down your tire rims, and other metal parts that may have any salt or other chemicals for deicing them. They may rust the metal parts.
- If using mobility aides and crossing crosswalks be very alert to oncoming traffic as they may not be able to stop in time due to the ice and low visibility with sleet and freezing rain.

### **Snow and Low Wind Chills**

With snow there can come low wind chills bringing with it severe frostbite potential. This is especially dangerous for those wheelchair users that are paralyzed from either the chest or waist down. Other disabling conditions limit sensory abilities and heat maintenance in individuals so we suggest the following:

- Wear several layers of clothing with mittens over gloves on your hands. Use lined boots as footwear.
- Keep your neck, chest and head covered if you must go out for short periods.
- If you use a working assistance dog, have him wear a dog coat and consider boots for his paws. Dogs can also suffer from hypothermia and frostbite.
- If you become chilled while outside go back inside and warm up slowly. Do not jump into a hot bath as you may go into shock.
- Snow is dangerous for citizens using wheelchairs. If you are not accustomed to heavy wheeling, be very careful the added exertion could cause you to have a heart attack or stroke.
- Limit your exposure to snow and wind chills.
- Check feet, pelvic areas and hands for circulation problems. With wheelchair users this is important, as feeling may be limited or not present.

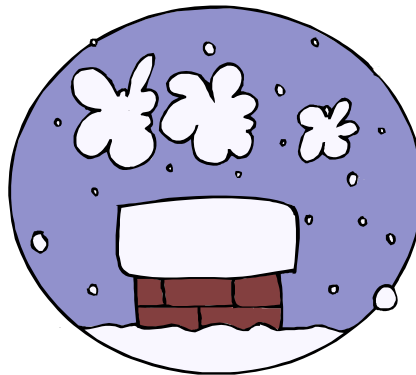
# CHIMNEY MAINTENANCE FOR WOOD BURNING APPLIANCES

Each year chimneys account for a significant number of residential structure fires in Washington State. In past years chimney fires have accounted for 12% of all structural fires.

The Chimney Safety Institute of America reports that creosote accumulation is the leading cause of chimney fires. A chimney that is dirty, blocked or is in disrepair can inhibit proper venting of smoke up the flue and can also cause a chimney fire. Nearly all-residential fires originating in the chimney are preventable. An annual chimney inspection by a certified chimney sweep can prevent fire or carbon monoxide poisoning.

The Chimney Safety Institute of America recommends the following chimney safety tips:

- Have your chimney checked every year.
- Burn only well-seasoned hardwoods.
- Install a chimney cap.
- Install a carbon monoxide detector.
- Have your chimney waterproofed.
- Have your chimney flashing inspected and maintained.
- Have a sealing damper installed in your wood-burning system.
- Have your chimney sweep ensure that your chimney has an appropriate liner.
- Following a violent storm, earthquake, flood or lightening strike, have your chimney inspected for damage—inside and out.
- Hire a certified chimney sweep.



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